

Intervention of PAX ROMANA or Agenda I on 9 at the 35th Session of the Commission on Human Rights

The Right of Peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation."

Mr President and distinguished delegates,

At its 39th Session, the Commission adopted the resolution 1983/8 relating to the question of East Timor, calling upon all interested parties, namely, Portugal, as the administering power, and the representatives of the people of East Timor as well as Indonesia to cooperate fully with the UN with a view to guaranteeing the free and full exercise of the right to self-determination by the people of East Timor. And at its 36th Session, the Subcommission on Prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities in resolution 1983/26 recommends that the CHR should continue to consider with attention the evolution of the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in East Timor. (S/46483 26-10-83 Sec. Council)

From the reports that have reached us, we wish to draw the attention of this Commission to the grave situation affecting the East Timorese people. Famines, killings, tortures, rapes and beatings have all been well documented and are still occurring. But what is the day-to-day life like in East Timor under the foreign occupation by the armed forces of Indonesia? A very disturbing picture of a total lack of fundamental rights and a climate of fear and insecurity emerges as a common thread in letters and interviews. The economy is under military control, corruption is rampant, aid and health supplies are appropriated and sold, all in- and outgoing material is censored. Timorese homes and personal property have been confiscated, people are forced to speak Indonesian and children are only taught about Indonesian and not their own culture and history. There is no recourse to law.

Amnesty International has expressed concern at the persistent reports of the torture of East Timorese. In a press release of July 20, 1983, AI announced "Indonesian troops operating in East Timor have been issued secret instructions that permit torture". The statement continues "An 82 page military manual captured from Indonesian forces by the East Timorese resistance movement, FRETILIN and independently authenticated by AI tells soldiers not to photograph prisoners being stripped naked and tortured with electric shocks". The organisation has also expressed fears for suspected FRETILIN supporters who have 'disappeared' after detention. Many are believed

to have been summarily executed after being tortured under interrogation. 250 resettlement villages have been constructed to house "most of the people who lived in or near the interior mountains", to cite a recent Australian Department of Foreign Affairs report. Built in neat, straight rows normally along or near a road, these resettlement villages are military in origin and purpose. Traditionally Timorese have lived in scattered extended family groups and in close spiritual affinity with the land with which they have evolved over centuries a finely balanced economic relationship. The concentration of peoples in resettlement areas, "hamletting", away from their land thus represents a radical restructuring of Timorese society. The psychological and cultural impact on the Timorese has been shattering.

In the newspaper, the "Australian" dated January 6, 1984, it was reported that severe food shortages have stricken parts of East Timor following recent Indonesian military operations. An estimated 10,000-12,000 Indonesian troops backed by helicopters, AMX tanks and counter insurgency Bronco CV-10 type aircraft have been involved in operations in the territory which Indonesia annexed by force in December 1975. This military move, quoting Church sources said, had completely disrupted already precarious food supplies. Crops have been destroyed and farmers have been unable to get to their fields or to forage food in the forests. In the central region of Viqueque and the eastern region of Dospalos, food shortages have been aggravated by a flood of refugees, with about 3000 living around the city of Viqueque. The serious scarcity of food in various areas has been confirmed by diplomatic and other sources here.

On November 17, 1983, the Conference of Indonesian Bishops sent a six page letter to Timorese churchmen assuring them of their support and calling for the respect of Human rights in East Timor. "We have met in our hearts with all, but especially with those who have lost parents, children, relatives and friends, with those who have lost their possessions, with those who have lost any source of income and even with those who have lost their lives" the Bishops said.

Meanwhile arrests have continued: 600 people were brought in for questioning recently in Dili, 125 in Baucau and 34 in Viqueque. Eight schoolchildren aged 14-15 were arrested in Viqueque and held "for several days in a room so narrow they could not sleep". Dozens of people, including three children were hauled away by unknown abductors in civilian

clothes, it is feared that those abducted could meet the same fate as the 3000-4000 prisoners who have been executed since last March 4 by military and police groups popularly called the "death squads" in Indonesia.

In this agony and suffering, East Timor is completely cut off from the rest of the world. The UNRC has been banned for "security reasons" from the interior. It can send representatives only to Dili and the island of Atauro off the capital where about 2100 prisoners are confined.

In presenting these facts, we draw your attention to two basic considerations.

The first is the principle that the right and aspiration of the East Timorese people to self-determination is non-negotiable and must be upheld. This right is fundamental to human development and cannot be considered to have been forfeited by the East Timorese people because of the passage of time, the weight of the Indonesian presence or material changes in the situation.

Second, that Indonesian invasion of East Timor contravenes the UN Charter and international law. To accept what has happened would, in general terms, be to subvert the authority of the UN and respect for international law.

Proponents of the self-determination position take a long term view based on an openness to his ory which, it is argued, should not be pre-empted by precipitate political decisions. The issue should therefore be kept on the UN agenda and abstaining countries are urged to reconsider their position and commit themselves in support of the East Timorese. It will also ensure the international security and pressure which is so vital to the well-being of the Timorese people.

Thank you, Mr President.

Geneva, 21.2.84.